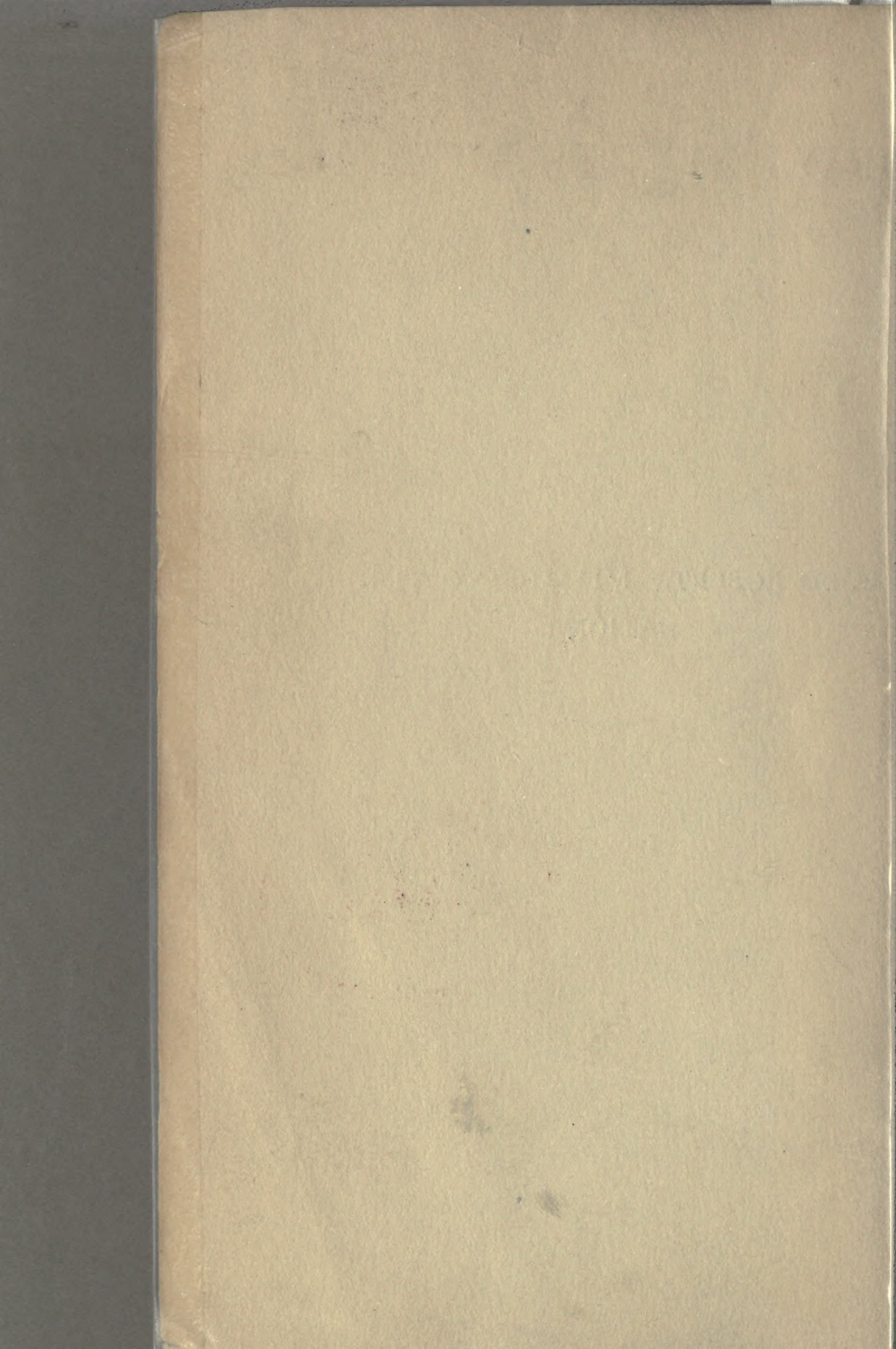


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Lord Roberts' message to
the nation

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LORD ROBERTS' MESSAGE TO THE
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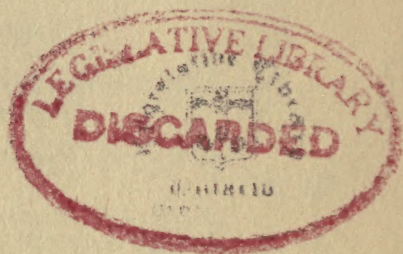


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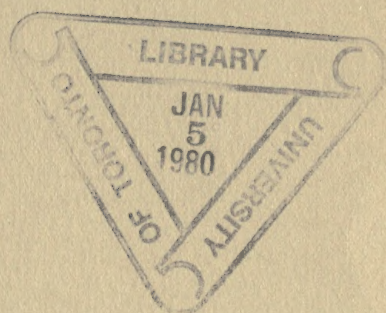
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BY FIELD-MARSHAL EARL ROBERTS
V.C., K.G.



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1912



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INTRODUCTION

My recent speech in Manchester has been so widely discussed, and, in certain quarters, so gravely misrepresented or misunderstood, that, in the interests of the cause which I there defended, I am impelled to place before the public a complete text of that speech with such notes and supplementary matter as seem necessary to make my meaning unmistakable except to faction or to prejudice.

No one who has followed with attention the efforts of the National Service League has any right to imagine that we desire a strong army solely in order to invade the territory of European or more distant States ; or that we wish to root out the Territorial Force in order to establish in its place an army system modelled on the army system of Germany ; or, again, that we have the ambition of resuscitating once more medieval blood-lust, anarchic plunder, and delight in war !

What, then, are our aims ?

We desire, in the first place, that all patriotic men within this Empire should be made to see and to feel that from one cause or another England, by neglecting her armaments, has drifted into a position

which it is impossible to describe otherwise than as a position of danger. We desire further that all patriotic men should, without either insincerity or delay, put to themselves the questions: How are we to arrest that drifting, and how are we to evade or overcome that danger? And, in the third place, with regard to foreign nations or empires, our ambition is simply that States well-disposed towards us, whether near or distant, may have it in their power to mix with their friendliness respect, and with their goodwill esteem.

In the following pages I have stated in brief the solutions of these problems which, after some experience of peace and war and after some deliberation not free from anxiety, I have come to look upon as the only workable solutions, as the only solutions consonant with our honour and our continuance as an Empire.

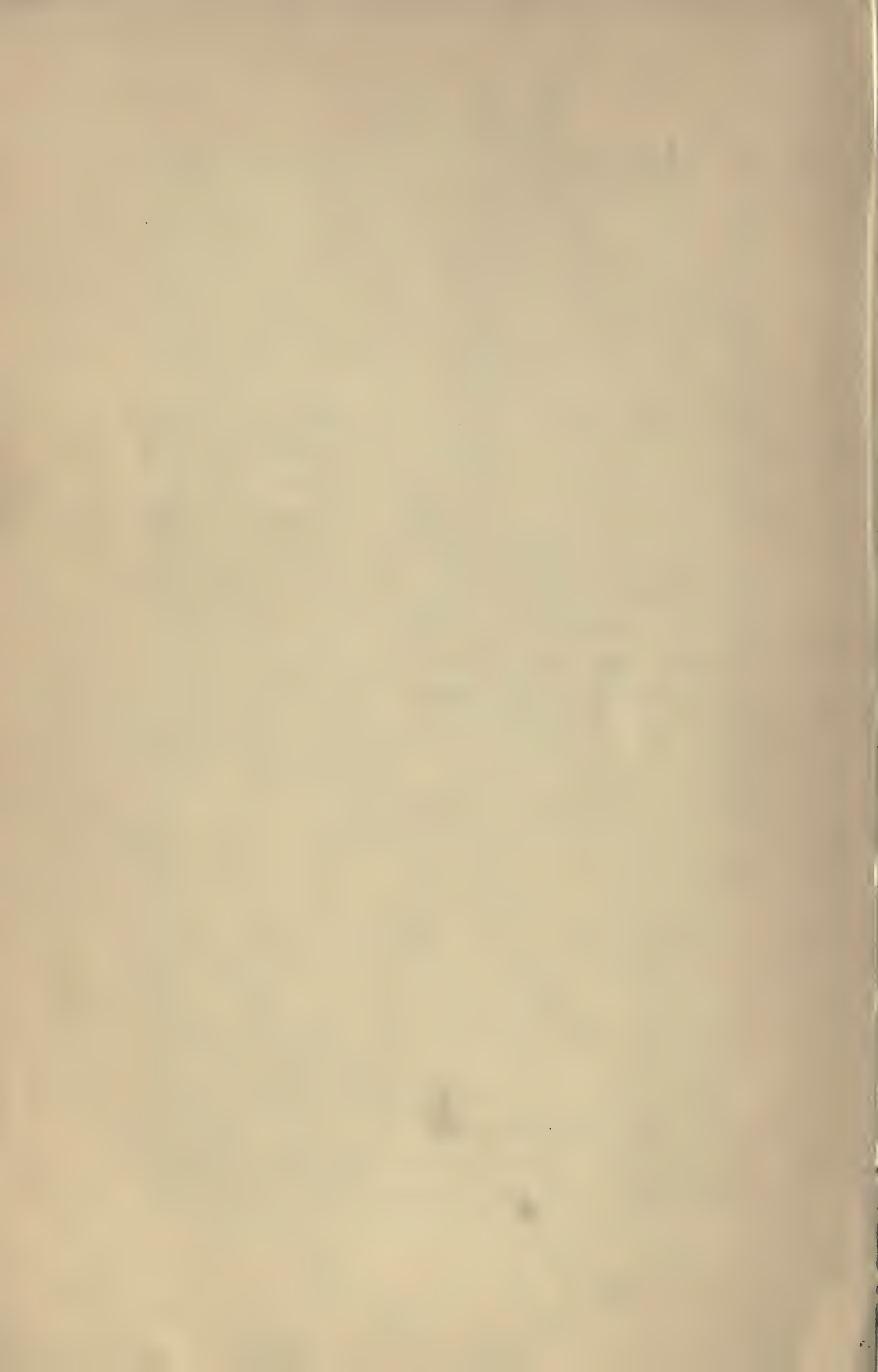
And in view of the discussion and criticism which this speech has provoked, and still provokes, I may be permitted to add, that, in whatever I have said in this speech as in other speeches, I have had in sight but one purpose—the good of this nation and the safety and greatness of this Empire. It is for my fellow-countrymen to judge between me and those who, during these past few weeks, have willingly or unwillingly misinterpreted my purpose or misstated my words. It is also for my countrymen to decide upon a far mightier issue; for in this self-governed, free, and democratic State of England it

is for all its citizens to assert whether, in this matter of war and preparedness for war, they shall face the facts, resolute to see things as they are, or whether they shall continue indifferent to the history of the past and obstinately blind to the warnings of the present, even to such beacons as are now aflame on every hill from the Balkans to the Dardanelles !

And I appeal above all to the young men of this nation, to our young men of every rank and social status, to the young men of every trade and profession and calling of any kind ; for it is they who, in victory or in disaster, will have to meet the consequences of this tremendous decision. It is they, in a word, who now are England.

Young men, young men of British birth, is it possible that you can shirk the issue, that you can fail to hear, or that, hearing, you can fail to respond to your country's summons, to the memories of the past, to the hopes of the future ?





LORD ROBERTS' MESSAGE TO THE NATION

PART I

PEACE AND WAR

A SPEECH TO THE CITIZENS OF MANCHESTER,
OCTOBER 25, 1912.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

This is only the second occasion in a long life on which I have had the privilege of speaking in your city; and it is with no inadequate sense of the value of that occasion and of the responsibility attaching to the position which, for the past ten years, I have taken up towards this Empire and its armies that I come before you this afternoon. For in the upbuilding of that Empire what city in our dominions has taken a more conspicuous part than this city, made illustrious almost since its foundation by commercial enterprise and by its political sagacity and spirit in affairs? In the eighteenth century your merchants aided the designs of the elder Pitt, and of the statesmen who followed him, in founding that power in India and the East which to-day is the envy and the admiration of the nations. In the nineteenth, within my own memory, your city, under the unforgotten leadership of John Bright, Richard Cobden, and

Milner Gibson, gave a great watchword¹ to a great and still living party, and by its resolute effort forced through Parliament the repeal of the Corn Laws, one of the most momentous and revolutionary measures in this nation's history.

Nor, in more recent times, has Manchester abated her zeal or her vital energy in every phase of English political life. The greatest, most temperate, and statesmanlike Liberal newspaper in England is night by night printed within your walls; so that, at least in one phase of our national life and amongst one group of our fellow-citizens—the Liberal party, that is to say—it is literally true that what Manchester thinks to-night London thinks to-morrow. And a certain election the other day, and the overflow meetings which, I understand, have been held in favour of Tariff Reform within the sacred precincts of the Free Trade Hall itself, give a further proof that here in Manchester you are not petrified in your opinions, but that the stream of your political life flows fresh and from the fountain-head.

Judge then, gentlemen, whether it was not with some concern that I looked forward to this occasion; judge whether it was not with some searching of the heart that I reflected upon what I have this afternoon to say to you. For does it not appear at first sight as if what I have to say is not merely antagonistic to the teaching of the two

¹ Apart from Free Trade and unrestrained competition, there are three other doctrines, or political principles, associated with the Manchester School: (1) To maintain peace at any cost; (2) strictly to avoid all interference with the internal affairs of foreign Powers; (3) to subordinate as far as possible all other interests to the interests of industry. The complete organization of industry was to have, as its immediate consequence, the abolition of war. These principles crystallized later into the familiar watchword of Liberalism: "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform."

greatest names of the Manchester School, John Bright and Richard Cobden, but is in every way the contradiction of the characterizing ideas and the traditions associated with this city itself?

For I come before you to-day to advocate the necessity of National Service; to affirm once more that the "Nation in Arms" is the only worthy and sure bulwark of this Empire and these islands.¹ Cobden, on the other hand, has left it on record that he considered it the glory and the exceeding great reward of all his labours that he had contributed, in however small a degree, to that universal disarmament of Europe, which, he sanguinely hoped, would be the result of Free Trade and of expanding commerce and the organization of labour. And John Bright, his great colleague, in one speech after another, added the lustre of his eloquence to that same high and flattering anticipation. I can remember easily the ardent and sympathetic reception which those anticipations met in the France of Louis Napoleon; I can remember also the added weight which France's enthusiasm gave to those happy anticipations here in England. War, indeed, seemed at an end. To-morrow, it seemed, we should be turning our barracks into granaries and our arsenals into banking houses.

Gentlemen, I am, I trust, doing no wrong to the

¹ Succinctly, by "the Nation in Arms" I mean that every able-bodied citizen has patriotism enough to take his place in the firing-line to repel invasion; and, secondly, that he has common sense enough to undergo the discipline to make that self-sacrifice effective. In the second part of this book I have indicated what that preparation means. Here I may only observe that when Lord Haldane speaks of "the whole nation springing to arms at the call of duty" he is once more forgetting the part which discipline plays in modern war. A nation may "spring to arms," but if it is not disciplined, and thoroughly disciplined, its very courage will only serve to hasten its destruction. Within the last few weeks tens of thousands of brave Ottomans have sprung to arms, but with what dire results!

memory of these statesmen when I point out that in the very years—nay, in the very months—that they were cherishing these illusions of peace and universal disarmament, in those very months the mightiest and most disciplined force that this earth has ever contained was silently being drilled in that wide region from the Rhine to the Elbe and the Oder, and from the North Sea to the Bavarian frontier, until, the right hour having struck, that army disclosed itself in all its prodigious and crushing mass and in all its unmatched capacity for destruction and war. And, amid those auspicious dreams of peace, for what was that army being trained? Koeniggrätz, Metz, St. Privat, and Sedan are the answer. Nor did that army pause until upon the ruins of the Empire of the third Napoleon—upon the ruins, I may say, of France, unprepared in peace, and in war scattered and dismayed—it had reared a new Empire, the Empire of William I., of Frederick I., and of William II., for whose personal character, noble and imaginative patriotism, and capacities as a ruler, I yield to no man in my admiration. Such, gentlemen, was history's ironic comment upon John Bright's and Richard Cobden's eloquently-urged enthusiasm. Let me not increase by any word of mine the crushing weight of Destiny's criticism.

Now, gentlemen, at the present day, now in the year 1912, our German friends, I am well aware, do not, at least in sensible circles, assert dogmatically that a war with Great Britain will take place this year or next; but in their heart of hearts they know, every man of them,¹ that, just as in 1866 and just as in 1870, war will take

¹ It would be easy, I am informed on good authority, to illustrate this from passages in the works of German writers from Treitschke, the great exponent of Bismarckism, to writers of the present day. And I may quote a paragraph in support of

place the instant the German forces by land and sea are, by their superiority at every point, as certain of victory as anything in human calculation can be made certain. "Germany strikes when Germany's hour has struck." That is the time-honoured policy of her Foreign Office. That was the policy relentlessly pursued by Bismarck and Moltke in 1866 and 1870; it has been her policy

my thesis from an unexpected source, that of Mr. H. M. Hyndman, in a letter to the *Morning Post* of November 9, nearly three weeks after my Manchester speech. Mr. Hyndman, I need not remind my readers, not only enjoys a wide experience of German Socialism, but of many phases of German politics and political life. He writes: "I cannot for the life of me understand what Sir Edward Grey hopes to gain by rebuking Lord Roberts for stating that which the whole Continent knows perfectly well to be the truth. The German Fleet is being strengthened now, as it has been increased up to the present time, in order either to attack us in the North Sea, when the German Government thinks it safe to do so; or, by threats of what will occur, to force us to accept German policy, and allow the German Empire to do what it pleases with Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland, after having crushed or arranged with France. If Germany is not hostile to this country, why does the whole Pan-German party (and Press), to which the heir to the German throne openly belongs, declare that she is? Why is it that 'England is the enemy' is the common talk all through German middle-class circles? Or, on the other hand, if the relations between the two nations are so excellent as our Foreign Minister assures us they are—thus leading many sober Frenchmen to believe that our *entente* with France only means that we shall betray the French Republic the moment it suits us to do so—why are we fortifying Rosyth as a naval base, why have we withdrawn our Fleet from the Mediterranean to concentrate it in home waters, and why was every journal in this country discussing the issues of peace and war with the German Empire when the late German Ambassador came to this country? More important still, why have we given way to a worse Government than that of Germany—the Russian Government, to wit—on matters of the first importance in Persia and elsewhere? Are the English people mere children thus to be fed on the pap of fatuous pacificism and convenient party misrepresentation at one of the most serious crises in the history of our race?"

decade by decade since that date ; it is her policy at the present hour. And, gentlemen, it is an excellent policy. It is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history. Under that policy Germany has, within the last ten years, sprung, as at a bound, from one of the weakest of naval Powers to the greatest naval Power, save one, upon this globe. But yesterday, so to speak, the British Fleets did not feel the furrow of a German war-keel on the wide seas. To-day every British warship and every British merchant vessel thrills in all her iron nerves to that mighty presence. Just as in 1866, by the massing of her armies towards this frontier or towards that frontier, Prussia controlled the action of Austria, so Germany constrains the action of England at the present day. Do you wish for proofs? I point to the gradual displacement of the British Fleet before the German menace. I point to the Mediterranean, bereft of British battleships, and to the gradual narrowing, year by year, of our once far-flung battle-line.

We may stand still : Germany always advances, and the direction of her advance, the line along which she is moving, is now most manifest. It is towards that consummation which I have described—a complete supremacy by land and sea. She has built a mighty fleet ; but, as if nothing were done so long as anything stands between her and her goal, still she presses on—here establishing a new Heligoland, for every available island in the North Sea has been fortified—there enclosing Holland in a network of new canals, and deepening old river-beds for the swifter transport of the munitions of war, whether to her army or her fleet.

Contrasted with our own apathy or puerile and spasmodic efforts, how impressive is this magnificent and unresting energy ! It has the mark of true

greatness; it extorts admiration even from those against whom it is directed!

But, it is urged by the advocates of universal peace, how monstrous is this expenditure of human strength and human ingenuity, if unused, and how yet more monstrous the waste of human life if actually used in war!¹ And how much more sane is the policy of Cobden and of Bright and of their imitators or followers at the present day! Gentlemen, arguments which prove the folly and criminality of war are, at the present stage of history, like the arguments which prove the folly and criminality of ambition and of the love of glory. Even those who argue most eloquently against glory do, by that very eloquence, seek to win glory; and those who argue most forcibly against war do, nevertheless, live, and for long will continue to live, under an invisible power which has made war an inseparable portion of human polity. Much, during the autumn of 1911, was said and written upon arbitration. America's action in the Panama Canal, and the impotence of diplomatists in the Balkan crisis,² are again history's ironic comment in the autumn of 1912! Arbitration most certainly is

¹ It is, or ought to be, superfluous to rebut the frantic accusation brought against myself and the National Service League by a leading Liberal weekly on October 26—that of blood-lust. Can there be Englishmen—or men bearing English names—in whom all sense of personal honour is so decayed, that to resent a national affront or to defend their Fatherland from foreign aggression appears a duty from which they recoil in shuddering apprehension?

² Since these words were spoken, with what an unparalleled rapidity has event crowded upon portentous event in the Near East! I have no wish to establish hasty analogies or to draw premature inferences; but what Englishman can consider the events of these past three weeks and remember without a pitying smile Lord Haldane's naïve assurance that with six months' training our Territorials would be ready for war! Did ever dilettantism so give itself away?



more humane than war; but, at the present stage of the polity of nations, arbitration again and again refuses to extend itself to some of the most vital and essential questions—questions which, to a nation or empire sensitive alike to its honour and to its abiding interests, make war unavoidable.

Again, we have heard much during the current year of the power of Labour in international politics. The German Socialist, it is said, will not make war upon his French or his English comrade. Gentlemen, it is to the credit of the human race that patriotism, in the presence of such organizations, has always proved itself superior to any class or any individual. Love of country has on the actual day of battle always proved itself superior to love of profit. That law has not been abrogated, and if war broke out to-morrow the German working man would quit himself like a German, and the British working man, I hope, like a Briton.

Hence, gentlemen, the mistrust with which I have always viewed the proposals of British Ministers for a limitation of armaments. Emanating from Great Britain, such proposals must always, I imagine, impress a foreign observer as either too early or too late in English history. For how was this Empire of Britain founded? War founded this Empire—war and conquest! When we, therefore, masters by war of one-third of the habitable globe, when *we* propose to Germany to disarm, to curtail her navy or diminish her army, Germany naturally refuses; and pointing, not without justice, to the road by which England, sword in hand, has climbed to her unmatched eminence, declares openly, or in the veiled language of diplomacy, that by the same path, if by no other, Germany is determined also to ascend! Who amongst us, knowing the past of this nation, and the past of all nations and cities that have ever

added the lustre of their name to human annals, can accuse Germany or regard the utterance of one of her greatest Chancellors a year and a half ago,¹ or of General Bernhardt three months ago, with any feelings except those of respect?

Gentlemen, other world-Powers besides Germany have arisen and are arising around us; but there is one way in which Britain can have peace, not only with Germany, but with every other Power, national or imperial, and that is, to present such a battle-front by sea and land that no Power or probable combination of Powers shall dare to attack her without the certainty of disaster. That is the only reply worthy of our past and wise for our future which we can or ought to make to those unparalleled efforts which I have described. And there is a way in which England can have war; there is a way in which she is certain to have war and its horrors and calamities: it is by persisting in her present course, her apathy, unintelligence, blindness, and in her disregard of the warnings of the most ordinary political insight, as well as of the examples of history.

And what is the lesson which History enforces?

¹ In March, 1911, when every pulpit and every newspaper, under the influence of President Taft's message, promised us within a brief period universal peace and disarmament, the German Chancellor, Herr Bethmann-Hollweg, had the courage and the common sense to stand apart, and, speaking for his Emperor and his nation, to lay it down as a maxim that, at the present stage of the world's history, the armed forces of any nation or empire must have a distinct relation to the material resources of that nation or empire. This position seems to me as statesmanlike as it is unanswerable; but in applying the principle to our own country, I should be inclined to modify it by saying that the armed forces of any nation or empire ought to represent, not only its material resources, but the spirit which animates that nation or empire—in a word, that its armed forces should be the measure of the nation's devotion to whatever ends it pursues.

Of two courses you must choose one: you must either abandon your Empire, and with it your mercantile wealth; or, in the world as it is at present, be prepared to defend it.

But, you will say, are we so unprepared? Have we not a Fleet? Have we not an Army?

We have a Fleet, but that Fleet is rapidly becoming unequal to the fleets by which we may be opposed, and by the inadequacy of our land forces it is maimed and hampered in its very nature as a Fleet. For the essence of a Fleet in such an Empire as ours is the utmost mobility: it must have complete freedom of action. But if, in addition to its own duties, our Fleet has to perform the rôle of an army of defence, what must follow? It becomes a "wooden wall" indeed, unmoving and inert, anchored around these shores. It is helpless to protect our food-supplies, without the regular arrival of which we must starve.

A paramount Navy we must possess, whether of two keels to one or three keels to two. That is a self-evident truth. But if this Empire is to keep abreast of the rapid and tremendous developments amongst the world-Powers around us, something more is necessary, and the necessity increases with every year, almost with every month. It is the necessity for an Army strong enough to insure the mobility of our Navy, and strong enough also to make our strength felt on the mainland of Europe, should we ever appear there as the armed ally of another Power, as we were on the verge of doing last autumn. That also is, or ought to be, self-evident.

What, then, is my plan, and what is my ultimate counsel to the nation and the message to my countrymen that at this solemn hour I would utter? It is the message burnt into my mind twelve years ago during the crisis of the South

African War; it is the message which every hour of that protracted and not too glorious struggle made me feel to be more and more necessary; and, I am compelled to say frankly, it is the message which events, some quite recent and some remoter, have compelled me to regard as more pressing in 1912 than in 1900-1901. Gentlemen, that message is: "Arm and prepare to quit yourselves like men, for the time of your ordeal is at hand." A long interval has been allowed us for preparation; for in this era of rapid evolution twelve years is a big space in human affairs. Twelve years have been given to us, and in those years what have we done? We have modified and remodified the effete voluntary system; we have invented several new names and a new costume. But as regards efficiency and as regards preparedness for war, we are practically where we were in 1900.¹

For, so far as the choice between the voluntary system and some form of National Service is concerned, what have these twelve years demonstrated, except the futility and positive danger of any and every other system except some form of compulsion? There has, I say, been much juggling with words and names. The old Militia and Volunteers have disappeared, and the Special Reserve and the Territorials have taken their place; there has been much complimentary and interested or disinterested laudation by Members of Parliament, and, I regret to say, by some few officers of the army. The fact remains, that in the opinion of every impartial soldier with any experience of modern war—in the opinion, I say, of every soldier, whether British, German, or French, who has given any attention

¹ For a more complete examination of this subject, I must refer the reader to the First Part of "Fallacies and Facts," published two years ago in answer to Lord Haldane's and Sir Ian Hamilton's "Compulsory Service."

to the subject, this great Empire is wholly unprepared for war. As a European Power, as a Continental Power, we do not exist—for war. Our Army, as a belligerent factor in European politics, is almost a negligible quantity. This great Empire, indeed—and the more we exalt its greatness and its unrivalled character, the more astounding does our recklessness appear—this great Empire is at all times practically defenceless beyond its first line. Such an Empire invites war. Its assumed security amid the armaments of Europe, and now of Asia, is insolent and provocative.

For remember that war does not begin, nor does it end, on the day of battle. There is a kind of war which goes on silent and unperceived amid apparent peace. That is the war which undermines commerce, which profoundly affects a city like your city. If once you permit any one State to be your undisputed superior by sea and land, that hour, even if not a shot be fired, you cease to be a free nation. You are no longer an Empire. Your commercial greatness is vanished. You hold your very lives by the sufferance of another, and would have to submit to any terms he might dictate.

Such, gentlemen, is the origin, and such the considerations which have fostered in me the growth of this conviction—the conviction that in some form of National Service is the only salvation of this nation and this Empire. The Territorial Force is now an acknowledged failure—a failure in discipline, a failure in numbers, a failure in equipment, a failure in energy.¹ I have so often demonstrated this thesis; I have so often analyzed the contra-

¹ Since these words were spoken a remarkable series of letters in the *Daily Mail*, emanating from every grade in the Territorial Army itself, has illustrated and demonstrated this position point by point.

dictions¹ in the arguments of the supporters of the Territorial movement; I have so often exposed their vamped-up statistics, and the rewards and encouragement offered by politicians to every soldier or civilian willing to say a word in praise of that scheme—I have done all this so often that there seems nothing left for me to say. To you, as practical business men, I will merely repeat this one statement—a statement the truth of which is known to every experienced soldier—that so long as the Territorial Force is based on voluntary enlistment, it is impossible to give its members a sufficiently lengthy and continuous period of training to insure a discipline which will stand the severe test of modern war. In saying this, I am making no aspersions against the zeal or intelligence of the patriotic men who compose the Force; neither they nor their employers can afford the necessary time, so long as all men in this country are not treated alike, and all compelled to serve their apprenticeship in the National Forces.² And, unless I am misinformed, the majority of the Territorials are now in favour of compulsion.

Gentlemen, only the other day I completed my

¹ See, for example, my speech at the Mansion House, which forms the second part of the present publication.

² As an illustration, let me quote a letter which I received from an important firm of manufacturing chemists in reply to a request from the Secretary of the National Service League to be allowed to speak to their men on the subject of Universal Military Training: "We regret that our manager at Hounslow is not in favour of your going there, for fear Territorial enlistment may be encouraged. Our business is of a peculiar nature, and is already quite seriously interfered with by the training of the appreciable number of Territorials in our employ. The difficulty is that ours is very skilled labour; in many cases we have no duplicate men, and outsiders cannot temporarily take up and discharge the duties of these men. When service is compulsory we shall be on equal terms with everybody else, and willing to bear an increased burden."

eightieth year, and to some of you, doubtless to many of you, I am indebted for one of the moments of the deepest gratification in my life, and the words I am speaking to-day are, therefore, old words—the result of earnest thought and practical experience; but, gentlemen, my fellow-citizens and fellow-Englishmen, citizens of this great and sacred trust, this Empire, if these were my last and latest words, I still should say to you, “Arm yourselves!” And if I put to myself the question, How can I, even at this late and solemn hour, best help England?—England that to me has been so much, England that for me has done so much—again I answer, “Arm and prepare to quit yourselves like men, for the day of your ordeal is at hand.” I have commanded your armies in peace and in war. In my early years, as in my middle life, and now in these my latest years, I have felt to the quick the glories accompanying the armies of the past across every battlefield. What made the valour of those armies so distinguished? One thing at least: it was that, in officers exclusively, and in the ranks mainly, they were composed of men who regarded citizenship as incomplete unless it involved soldiership. Gentlemen, you have been enfranchised, many of you, by the great Acts of 1832 and 1867. I say to you, the young men of this city and of this nation, that your enfranchisement is not complete until you have become soldiers as well as citizens, prepared to attest your manhood on the battlefield as well as at the election booths.

Much has been said recently of the rights and the power of the workers of this nation. We all, I hope, belong to that class—workers—but the artisan class of the nation has been urged—and to you, the working men of Manchester, I now specially address myself—you have been urged, I say, to refuse to do your duties in war until your

rights in peace are granted. Gentlemen, I say to you, that is not the policy either of Britishers or of men. I will go further: I say to you that it is not by declining or shirking duty that you will extend your rights. He who diminishes the power and vital resources of Great Britain diminishes the power and the vital resources of every Britisher. How can you most easily and most securely better yourselves as Britishers—as working men? By making England better, by making it better worth your while to be a citizen of, and a worker in that nation! If you seized by violence or by Act of Parliament all the accumulated capital of the centuries, you might have a madman's holiday for a time; but in the end you would emerge bankrupt and starving. You yourselves are the capital of the nation—the life-wealth of the nation—its manhood. Weapons, however perfect, will not make an army. Men are necessary—men of spirit, men of energy, loving their country, not merely loving their class or themselves. And on you, in turn, that discipline and those duties will confer unreckonable benefits. A tyranny imposes an exterior restraint; but you, in your free democratic constitution, should consider it as your privilege to impose upon yourselves from within that discipline and those sacred duties.

I say to you, therefore, assert your rights as Britishers by demanding the greatest, the highest of all civic and of all national rights—the right to be taught to defend your country—the right, that is, to defend your own honour as Britons and your liberties as citizens of this Empire. Thus, and thus only, shall you be worthy of that Empire's great past and of the dignity which that past confers upon every man of you, whatever your position in life may be.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

ENGLEMERE, ASCOT, BERKS.
November 5, 1912.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "MANCHESTER
GUARDIAN."

SIR,

My attention has been drawn to the leader in your issue of the 4th instant, in which you deal with a passage in my speech in Manchester. I am too much accustomed to adverse criticism in my efforts to arouse the nation to a sense of its unpreparedness for war to resent in any way the attacks of my opponents. But when a paper of such standing as that of the *Manchester Guardian* completely misconstrues what was certainly a salient passage in my speech, I feel bound, in justice to the cause which I have at heart, to explain my meaning more fully than was possible when I was dealing with the whole question of National Defence in relation to our position as a world-Power.

It is true that I pointed out the striking process by which Germany has developed from a loose congeries of petty federated States to the united Empire which arouses the admiration of the world to-day. Before 1866 the German States, under the scarcely-established leadership of Prussia, were surrounded on every side by jealous rivals or hostile neighbours, and it seemed doubtful whether the unity which was the dream of Stein in 1806, and of the Revolutionists in 1848, could ever be attained.

except by a policy of blood and iron. Certain it is that Bismarck, the architect of united Germany, saw in the policy of successful war the only means of realizing German nationality, and of constructing the edifice of national greatness so firmly that it should stand "foursquare to all the winds that blow." The three hammer strokes of 1864, 1866, and 1870, were needed to achieve this result, but the strength and precision of those hammer blows were prepared by long years of patient, self-sacrificing labour, during which the German forces were made "as certain of victory as anything in human calculation can be made certain, by their superiority at every point." Of this process and development, inspiring the whole nation to manful effort and to individual sacrifice for the common fatherland, even if it be in preparation for death or victory on the battlefield, I said that "it is an excellent policy. It is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history." And I repeat that statement to-day, when the glorious achievements of the younger Nations in Arms have lent point to its truth, while they have established their claims to nationhood and the gratitude of hundreds of thousands of their kinsmen.

But to suggest that I am urging upon England that it should be her policy, first, to arm herself better than Germany, and then to make war on Germany, with or without a just cause, with or without even a quarrel, simply because England thinks herself at that moment able to win a war—this is a suggestion so strange and so repugnant to my mind that I am utterly at a loss to understand how it could be attributed to me, or elicited from my speech. A moment's reflection will show the vast difference between the position of Germany, with which I was dealing, and that of England to-day. While Germany, owing to her rapidly

expanding population and vast economic development, is impelled to look for means of expansion in a world which is already for the most part parcelled out, we, on the other hand, do not require or seek another square mile of dominion. Our object must be to develop the resources of our Empire, commercially, industrially, and socially. But in order to be able to do so we must be in a position to defend ourselves successfully against aggression, and so to remove the temptation which a wealthy but ill-defended Empire must always offer to a strong and virile people, proud of its achievements and conscious of its fitness to fill a greater place amid the nations. My whole speech was directed, therefore—as are all my efforts—to impressing upon my fellow-countrymen the terrible danger which is involved in the present situation, in which we alone find ourselves, as a nation, untrained, unorganized, and unarmed, amid a Europe in which every people, not only great Powers like Russia, Germany, and France, but the smaller States—Bulgaria, Servia, Greece, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark—stand as armed nations, providing a balance of forces which, while it strengthens each one of them physically and industrially, makes for peace with honour—or for the triumph of the right.

Yours very truly,

ROBERTS, F.M.



PART II

THE TERRITORIAL FORCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE controversies raised by my Manchester speech prove that there is still much misapprehension, not always involuntary, in regard to the position of the National Service League towards the Territorial Force. I therefore insert in this place a statement of that position which I made in a speech delivered in the Mansion House in July last.

As an introduction to that speech I may be permitted to quote from a statement which, as President of the League, I published in the *Times* in January, 1912 :

“It is not infrequently asserted that the League is hostile to the Territorials, that we have discouraged recruiting for them, and that, were our programme adopted, the Territorial Force would disappear. Nothing is further from the truth. From the date of its formation we have constantly praised the Territorial Force as an organization ; we have again and again borne willing witness to the patriotism of those who joined its ranks.

Thus in 1908, Lord Milner, speaking at the annual dinner of the League on June 24, said : “Let us hold up high the standard of efficiency for the Territorial army as we have got it, and let us back up those who have originated that army and who are trying to make the best of it ; let us back them up in all their efforts to make it as like a real army

in training and in equipment as it is possible to make it. That, I believe, is the proper course for us to pursue."

In our official statement issued in February, 1909, these words occur: "The National Service League has consistently given the warmest support to the Territorial Force from its inception, recognizing the great superiority in organization and capabilities that this Force provides as compared with the old Volunteer Force."

And, during the past year (1911), in his volume, "Fallacies and Facts," the President of the League, whilst criticizing Lord Haldane's and Sir Ian Hamilton's deductions, allots the highest praise to the public spirit alike of employers and employees who support the Territorial movement.

In addition to this, our members have actively helped the Territorial Force by working on the County Associations and by obtaining recruits. We are represented on the majority of the County Associations, and nearly one-fourth of the members of these Associations are also members of the National Service League. Again, many of our members are enrolled in the Territorials, and Lord Haldane himself, speaking at the headquarters of the 6th City of London Rifles on December 1, 1911, said there were numbers of the National Service League who had assisted in the work of recruiting for the Territorial Force, and he "took this opportunity of thanking them."

Moreover, it is to be observed that the whole programme of the National Service League is now based on the maintenance and expansion of the Territorial Force. Our programme, far from involving the disappearance of that Force, or of any part of that Force, accepts it in its entirety. All that it does is to change the system of recruiting, and thus enable the training to be given before and not after war breaks out. Were the League's pro-

posals adopted, not a single unit of the Territorial Force would be reduced, nor a man called upon to leave its ranks. The whole organization and personnel would be preserved, and their services would be invaluable in bridging the difficult period of transition from the old system to the new. The Territorial Force would be increased to an adequate strength, made efficient as a military machine, and would rest on the firm basis of universal military training of the manhood of the nation, instead of—as at present—on insufficient service given with difficulty by a patriotic minority.

The above, we trust, will be sufficient to dispose of the idea that there is, or ever has been, any antagonism on the part of the League towards the Territorial Force as a body. We contend that all able-bodied men should be trained in it.

But, whilst we have from the beginning praised the organization of this Force, whilst we have admired the patriotism and self-sacrifice of those who have joined it, and encouraged our members to support it, we do not conceal our opinion that, resting as it does on voluntary enlistment alone, it can never become a Force on which the country can rely for its protection in time of peril. Every year that passes emphasizes the correctness of this view. The Territorial Force is in the fourth year of its existence, and, despite the large measure of support given to it and the unwearied labour of one of the ablest War Ministers we have ever had, what is its condition? Its strength in round numbers should be 314,000. It is 264,000. All its members should do fifteen days' drill in camp every year. Only 155,300 have done so this year. It should have 11,300 Territorial Officers. It has only 9,500. Finally, 40 officers and 6,703 men were absent from camp this year without leave.

We ask any open-minded man whether a Force thus constituted is an army at all, much less an army.

to which this country can entrust its existence as a great Nation ?

We do not bring these facts forward in order to discredit Lord Haldane's courageous efforts or to depreciate the patriotism of those now serving in the Force. We bring them forward simply in order to demonstrate the impossibility of constructing a defensive Army equal to this country's needs on a basis of voluntary enlistment. If Lord Haldane, backed by the hearty support of King and country, has failed—and by his own admission he has failed—who is likely to succeed ?

Not many weeks ago this country was on the verge of a gigantic war. And it was a war which, if it had come, would have come unexpectedly and suddenly. What would have been our position ? All the soothing fallacies which pass current in time of peace—the belief that our Expeditionary Force can at the same time be sent abroad and yet kept at home to cover the training of the Territorial Force ; the belief that this Force is sure of six months' unmolested leisure in which it can fit itself for the serious business of war—would have been shattered in twelve hours. The Expeditionary Force—to be of any use at all—must have been despatched abroad without a day's delay ; and, for the defence of these islands, we should have had to rely upon a handful of Regulars left behind in the depots as “ unfit ” ; such of the Special Reserve as may not be required for the Expeditionary Force, and the National Reserve ; but mainly upon a Territorial Force,¹ nominally 264,000 strong, untrained for war, and further weakened by a shortage of 1,800 officers !

Now, making every allowance for the immense

¹ On June 17, 1908, Lord (then Mr.) Haldane said : “ In the event of a great war breaking out . . . the Territorials would be embodied, not for immediate fighting, if it could be avoided, but for their war training.”

resisting power which in moments of supreme peril nations and cities have occasionally derived from enthusiasm or despair, is it either fitting, we ask, or even prudent, that, in the twentieth century, Great Britain should repose her trust in so problematical and hazardous a presumption? For the transformation of the most heroic enthusiasm into an effective weapon of war demands time, exactly as the transformation of the Territorials into an efficient Army demands time. But when war comes it will come with great suddenness; the essential crisis will be on us in an instant, and for Great Britain—as Lord Salisbury in his latest utterances significantly warned us—the stake is not to be reckoned in millions of a war indemnity; the stake is our very existence as an Empire.

When Lord Haldane cites the exploits of untrained or semi-trained forces, when he speaks of “a whole nation springing to arms at the call of duty,” he has his eyes fastened upon other circumstances and upon other times than ours. Under the conditions of modern war, discipline alone can confront discipline on a field of battle.

“We appeal to our countrymen to join us in our effort,” I went on to say. “We appeal, above all, to the officers and men of the existing Territorial Force. We are working to insure that their sacrifice to patriotism should not be made futile, nor their devotion thrown away. We are working to make the Army to which they belong a reality—that is to say, a Home Army efficient and sufficient; an Army which shall always be ready to take up the defence of these islands, and leave our Regulars free and our Fleets free to fight our battles elsewhere. We ask them to assist us in our efforts to introduce a system of compulsory training, the only system under which the safety of the country can be secured and the Territorial Force made really effective.”

THE TERRITORIAL FORCE

LORD HALDANE'S SCHEME EXAMINED

*Speech delivered in the Mansion House,
July 22, 1912.*

MY LORD MAYOR, MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,

It is seven years, almost to the day, since I had the honour of addressing a meeting of City men in this historic House on the subject of Imperial Defence. On that occasion I prefaced my remarks by saying: "I have but one object in coming before you to-day, namely, to bring home to my fellow-countrymen the vital necessity of their taking into their earnest consideration our unpreparedness for war." I then affirmed that the armed forces of this country were as absolutely unfitted and unprepared for war as they were in 1899-1900. And, my Lords and gentlemen, I grieve to have this afternoon to repeat to you that we are now scarcely better fitted or better prepared to carry on a war to-day than in 1905. The experience that we gained in the Boer War has had little effect upon our general military policy. We have neglected, except as regards the Regular Army, to profit by the lessons which that war ought to have taught us.

What are the causes of this indifference and this deep-seated apathy?

The causes, I think, are not far to seek. In the first place, if you will permit me as a soldier to

speak with the frankness of a soldier, it is one of the most dangerous tendencies of a nation, especially a democratic and self-confident nation, devoted to commerce and industry as we are, to ignore so disturbing and apparently so remote a contingency as our being forced into war. But there is another more immediate and a more particular cause, and it is to this that I mainly wish to direct your attention this afternoon.

Those who are responsible for our defences—and I must include in this category the late Minister for War—are, I maintain, either so blind to the lessons of history, or so enamoured of their own schemes, that they have deliberately lulled the nation into the belief that our present system is adequate, and that we are amply prepared to meet any dangers which come within the sphere of consideration by practical men. Thus the very men who ought to declare the facts in the plainest terms to the nation, the very men who ought to be endeavouring to rouse the nation from its fatal apathy, are the men who are fostering that spirit of indifference and self-confidence to which the nation of itself is already too prone. A democracy like ours will never take the necessary measures to safeguard itself so long as Ministers and a partisan Press proclaim that we are as a nation perfectly safe, when, as a matter of fact, our position is precarious in the extreme. This is a serious statement; but, if you will have patience with me, I hope to convince you that it is well founded, and it can be demonstrated from the principles of Imperial Defence which Lord Haldane has so frequently, and, it must be admitted, so plausibly, urged upon us.

My Lords and gentlemen, I have on many occasions paid a tribute to Lord Haldane's services. He has placed the problems of National Defence upon what is, for a British Minister, a new and

comprehensive basis; and he will go down to posterity as the first British statesman who, in theory, embodied in an actual scheme the idea of a National Army, "A Nation in Arms." This conception is so important to my whole subject this afternoon that it is worth while to recall some of Lord Haldane's expressed ideas with regard to it.

Speaking at Newcastle-on-Tyne in September, 1906, Lord Haldane said that we must have a highly trained nucleus in time of peace, and must look for a great expansion in time of war, "and for that expansion we must go to the nation, and ask for the co-operation of the nation," adding: "A nation in arms is the only safeguard for the public interests," and that "this idea has been neglected in our military contemplation. The problem," he went on to say, "is not a problem of the Regular Forces nearly so much as the problem of the nation in arms, of the people as a whole, with all the forces of the country welded into one."

Such an expression of opinion by the newly-created Secretary of State for War was to many of us an augury of great hope. It seemed that at last Great Britain might have an army adapted to modern conditions of war; that we had at last a Minister who not only understood, but had enunciated in a clear and masterly manner our own conception of a Nation in Arms. From that time forward, we imagined, the Nation in Arms would be regarded as a vigorous trunk from which the Regular Army and the personnel of the Navy would spring forth as branches, drawing their sap and the vigour of their life from the qualities—mental, moral, and physical—of the nation itself. For that, and no other, is the real meaning of the phrase "A Nation in Arms."

Such, my Lords and gentlemen, was Lord Haldane's language in September, 1906—less than

six years ago. Might it not be imagined that he was speaking as President of the National Service League, addressing a meeting such as I am addressing to-day?

Nor can it be denied that, in his subsequent description of the functions to be fulfilled by the Forces which he has substituted for the Volunteers, Lord Haldane has correctly kept in view the relationship which ought to exist between the branches and the trunk, between the Navy and the Regular nucleus on the one hand, and the "National Army lying behind" them on the other.

In his Memorandum on the Army Estimates for 1908-09, when the Territorial Force was created, Lord Haldane said that it was "designed—

"1. To compel any hostile Power which may attempt invasion to send a force so large that its transports could not evade our own fleets and flotillas.

"2. To free the Regular Army from the necessity of remaining in these islands to fulfil the functions of Home Defence.

"3. And," he said, "a further result will be to permit greater freedom to the Navy."

Elsewhere Lord Haldane protested that the "essence of the duty of the Territorial Force is to protect us against invasion"; and he pointed out that the Territorial Force might have to be entrusted with the defence of these shores after the whole of the Regular Army had left the country.

You will see, my Lords and gentlemen, that an efficient Territorial Force is thus made the fundamental condition of the effectiveness of our whole defensive system, and the question immediately arises, Can the Territorial Force perform the functions assigned to it? If it cannot perform those functions, the whole defensive system, of which it is the central pillar, must fall to the ground.

What, then, is this system ?

It consists, for an Empire such as ours, of three parts—

1. A supreme Navy, the standard for which has been laid down by the present Government as that of a 60 per cent. superiority over the next strongest Navy.

2. A Regular Army, to act as a garrison and police force to our Empire in time of peace, and as a striking force in time of war.

3. A Home Army of such a character as regards numbers and training as would enable it to free the Navy and the Regular Army from the primary duties of Home Defence by providing direct security against an attempted invasion of these shores, and at the same time to form a potential reserve which could supply by voluntary effort in a national emergency powers of expansion to the Regular Army when fighting for the very existence of our Empire abroad.

Does our Territorial Force, as it stands to-day, provide us with a Home Army of this character ?

I have no hesitation in answering this question in the negative. The Territorial Force is not and, under the conditions of voluntary service, never can be fit to perform the functions allotted to it by Lord Haldane himself.

My Lords and gentlemen, three conditions must be fulfilled in order that an Army may be efficient. These conditions are—

1. Sound organization.
2. Sufficient numbers.
3. Adequate training.

To the soundness of the organization established by Lord Haldane I have frequently testified. He wisely followed the advice given by the Royal Commission on the Auxiliary Forces, and there

is, therefore, as regards organization, nothing to criticize.

With regard to numbers, I have reminded you that, when the scheme was first put forward, Lord Haldane talked of a "Nation in Arms," and the figures he gave—"seven, or eight, or nine hundred thousand"—showed that he contemplated the training of a Home Army of a strength which would correspond in a measure to that phrase. At that time, too, he declared his intention of including in his scheme a comprehensive plan for the training of boys in Cadet Corps, which would have contributed materially to broaden the basis of the Home Army, and might have shortened the period of training for those who joined the Territorial Force, had that period in itself been adequate. But this most useful proposal he dropped at the outset at the bidding of a small section of his political supporters. And, my Lords and gentlemen, in actual numbers what do we possess? The establishment of the Territorial Army is 315,000. On April 1, 1912, the numbers obtained (a large proportion being mere boys) were 278,955—that is to say, four years after the scheme was started the force is about 25,000 short of the establishment laid down, but more than 400,000 short of the smallest number that Lord Haldane originally hoped for.

Can it be pretended for a moment that such a number provides the Home Army which Mr. Asquith described as necessary, if we are to be able to guard against a successful invasion of even 70,000 men? I say nothing at this point of the danger of believing that no force larger than 70,000 may have to be dealt with; but I must point out that, in order to deal with an invasion of even 70,000 highly-trained soldiers, a field force of at least 300,000 partially-trained men are required, in addition to some 200,000 men needed for the pro-

tection of the naval bases and arsenals, and to garrison the principal places in Great Britain and Ireland.

It is important that you should realize the facts: that the number asked for was quite inadequate; that even that number has not been obtained, and that the age and physique of a considerable proportion of those who have come forward are not up to a satisfactory standard; for Lord Haldane has been concentrating all his efforts and the attention of the public on securing, at almost any cost, the *number* of men for the Territorial Force—that is, the total of 315,000 men, to which his ideal of a Nation in Arms has shrunk. But even in this he has failed. These frantic efforts to secure a nominal success are designed to distract attention from the far more serious question of the training of the Territorial Force, and to create the impression that the scheme is a masterpiece which is beyond criticism, and which has, once for all, made it quite unnecessary to discuss the question of compulsory service for the Home Army.

So much for organization and numbers; now for the third condition—namely, the *training* of the Territorial Force. In discussing this question I must try to avoid misinterpretation by saying that, in stating plain facts, I am not criticizing the officers or men of that Force. On the contrary, I honour them for their patriotism, and for the admirable example they are setting to their apathetic fellow-countrymen. It is the voluntary system that I condemn, and the politicians who are hoodwinking this nation into the belief that that system is adequate and sufficient for our needs. And surely I need not apologize for examining the standard of training laid down for the Territorial Force. Lord Haldane himself, in 1906, declared, “It is preparedness for war which is the key to the sort of organiza-

tion we ought to have in peace"; and on another occasion he said, "The contemplation of large numbers by the people of this country, who are unable to take into account questions of war efficiency and war organization, necessarily promotes dangerous national illusions." It is against such "dangerous national illusions" that I wish to warn my fellow-countrymen in the following analysis of the training of the Territorial Force.

The Territorial soldier can be enlisted at seventeen years of age, and the engagement is for four years. In the first year he must do a minimum of forty drills of an hour each, and a minimum of eight days or a maximum of fifteen days, in camp. In the next year he must do ten drills of an hour each, and the same camp training. The musketry standard can hardly be described as high, seeing that each man is only provided by the State with 90 rounds per annum, and in some cases this number is disposed of on an enclosed range on one day in the year. This is simply ludicrous, considering that, in modern war and with the modern rifle, the soldier who cannot use this weapon with skill and confidence is absolutely useless.¹

¹ In the course of the controversies raised by my Manchester speech the fallacy of the superiority of the volunteer to "the unwilling conscript" has once more reappeared. I must here repeat what I said in the House of Lords in April, 1911, that much of this talk about "one volunteer being worth two pressed men" is nonsensical. The truth is that one man, whether pressed or not, if well disciplined and carefully trained, is worth at least half a dozen undisciplined, insufficiently trained volunteers. No doubt, if I had to lead a forlorn hope requiring men determined to carry out the job, no matter what the odds against them might be, I would rather have half the number of men who volunteered than double the number ordered to perform it, provided all were equally well trained; but if it were a question of soldiers *versus* untrained volunteers, I would infinitely prefer to have ten well-trained and well-disciplined soldiers than fifty ill-trained and ill-disciplined volunteers.

I could give many instances from history in support of this

Such is the minimum peace training laid down for the Territorial Force. It is less than the minimum training in any army or Militia in the world. I am aware that many officers and men do a great deal more as individuals. But what is far more important—and I ask you, my Lords and gentlemen, most earnestly to realize the fact—a large number do not reach even this minimum amount of training.

The proposal to give six months' training after war breaks out is so amazing as to be unworthy of consideration, and it is difficult to believe that it was made seriously by its talented author, seeing that readiness for war is the purpose aimed at by every European nation; and now-a-days, when war breaks out with the greatest suddenness, and the stake at issue between two great nations going to war would be so gigantic, the temptation to secure the advantage of the initiative and to commence hostilities without declaration of war could hardly be resisted.¹

view—the opinions of great commanders like Washington and Napoleon—but I will here cite only one incident from my own experience of war:

During the Franco-German War of 1870-71, the French, from having an army without any means of expansion, were forced, after the first few weeks, to employ hastily-raised levies. These levies, even in greatly superior numbers, were no match for the highly-trained German soldiers. On one occasion towards the end of the war, 35,000 German soldiers found themselves engaged with a force of these recently-raised levies, numbering between 140,000 and 150,000. They had been given such training as was possible while war was going on, for four and a half months. They were brave men fighting for their own country, and in their own country, and what happened? Within a month 60,000 of them were killed, wounded, prisoners, or missing, while the remaining 80,000 were driven over the Swiss frontier and there interned.

¹ And as regards the much-needed six months' training, supposing, for argument's sake, that we could calculate on being given six months' warning, can we feel absolutely certain that

But it may be urged that, although the Territorial Force is evidently not fit to perform its functions without a proper course of recruit training, surely it would be possible to secure that training in time of peace, instead of postponing it until the outbreak of war, as Lord Haldane proposed. If the nation still hugs this delusion, I hope it will abandon it before it drags us down to disaster. For one hundred years the voluntary system for Home Defence has been tried and found wanting. Under it a sufficient number of men *have* never been forthcoming, and *can* never be forthcoming, to devote enough time in peace to render the Army fit for war. Discipline cannot be acquired by homeopathic doses; nothing but a considerable period of continuous training can give individual soldiers and military units that self-confidence and cohesion which are essential to success in war; and no modification of the voluntary system, no amount of lavish expenditure, no cajolery, no juggling with figures, will ever produce an adequate and efficient Home Army.

This truth was clearly expressed by the Duke of Norfolk when he said, with reference to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Auxiliary Forces, of which he was the President: "The breakdown is in almost every case attributed essentially to the nature of the voluntary system itself, which makes it impossible to demand a reasonable standard of efficiency without greatly reducing the forces."

the few patriotic employers who have allowed their men to join the Territorial Army, and are good enough to spare them for a week's or fortnight's training yearly, would or could consent to their being taken away for six months, during which time their business would go to pieces, while their competitors in trade, who have refused to allow their men to serve their country, would be reaping great benefit from their selfishness and want of patriotism?

Curiously enough, Lord Haldane, speaking of the Territorial Force, seems to have recognized the correctness of this conclusion, for in the House of Commons on March 9, 1908, he said: "Because it is a voluntary Army on a voluntary basis, you can only give it just so much training as volunteers are able and willing to take. . . ." Can anything be more condemnatory of the value of a Force, which will assuredly be required the moment war breaks out? And to quote the Duke of Norfolk again: "If you trust the present organization . . . you will be leaning on a prop which will fail when the day of trial comes."

What would be the result is simply this—for six months the striking force could not strike. The Regular Army could not leave these shores to assist our fellow-countrymen in India and the oversea Dominions, or to reinforce our friends and allies in accordance with the obligations of honour and mutual interest which we have undertaken. For six months the Navy would be hampered and shackled in performing its traditional duties of seeking out the enemy's fleets—it would, in fact, be deprived of that "greater freedom" which the Territorial Force was intended to give it.

But, my Lords and gentlemen, we have not had to wait for war to see the effects of this pernicious policy; its evil effects are already upon us, though nominally we are at peace with all the world. Year by year, during the past decade, the ocean area over which the British flag floats has been steadily narrowed, and within the past three months, the most presageful, the most ominous narrowing of all, has taken place. We have abandoned the Mediterranean Sea. But yesterday that great sea was like a British lake; to-day not a single British battleship disturbs the blue of its waters. Could any more significant, more startling warning ever be given to

a Government not wilfully deaf, or to a nation not wedded to luxury and self-indulgence, indifferent alike to its past glories and its present security?

What better exemplification could be imagined of the truth of Mahan's axiom that "a fleet charged with the care of its base is a fleet so far weakened for effective action"? And what does this whole process of the withdrawal of the British flag from one sea after another and its concentration in home waters indicate? It indicates just this, that while "the British Navy a hundred years ago was superior to the combined navies of all Europe," it is to-day little more than equal to the next largest European Navy, and is quite inadequate in proportion to the interests it has to guard.

This revolution in our relative strength at sea is mainly owing to the want of foresight on the part of successive Lords of the Admiralty, and it is incidentally an additional condemnation of our retention of the old voluntary system of our land defence. While we are standing still, Germany is moving, and we have this year the announcement of a new and larger programme, a programme which goes much beyond the Navy Law of 1900, and will, when completed, give Germany—the greatest military Power in the world—a group of battle fleets in the North Sea calculated to make us consider whether even our concentrated naval strength will be sufficient to cope with them.

My Lords and gentlemen, in mentioning Germany in this connection I want to make it perfectly clear that I do so in no spirit of hostility, with no wish to stir up any feeling of resentment or enmity against a great people bent upon working out their own salvation. I have not the slightest sympathy with the Press controversies carried on in both countries, which have done so much to embitter the feeling between what are really two

branches of the same race. What I desire to point out to my fellow-countrymen is simply this: Great Britain has attained to the limits of her territorial expansion. She neither requires nor seeks another square mile of dominion. Her object should be to develop the resources of her people commercially, industrially, and socially, and to maintain the traditions of religious and political freedom which have been the main cause of her greatness. At the same time there is Germany, a great homogeneous State, with a population of 66,000,000, which is consciously aiming at becoming a world-Power with "a place in the sun," where its vigorous progeny may develop a German life, actuated by German thought and ideals. This nation has already built up, in an incredibly short space of time, the second Navy in the world, not, moreover, scattered over the seven seas, but concentrated like a clenched mailed fist in the waters of the German Ocean.

Who is there with any knowledge of the history of nations, or of the trend of European politics, but must see in these plain facts a danger of collision, no one can say when, but within a limit of time indicated by the convergence of the lines of destiny of the two peoples, and which at any moment may be accelerated by some misunderstanding or some conflict with the friend or ally of either country. To one whose sole desire is to see his country safe and at peace, pursuing the path of her destiny to even greater heights than she has as yet reached, it is simply amazing that anyone can imagine that the conflict of which I have spoken can be permanently averted merely by denying that there is any danger, or by abandoning our preparations for defence as an amiable invitation to Germany to do the same.

Germany—indeed the whole world—is well aware of the real feebleness underlying the proud appearance of our naval and military strength. She

knows that the efficacy of armaments to-day, even more than a hundred years ago, depends essentially upon their being founded upon the nation itself, and drawing their strength of mind and muscle, of courage and inspiration, from the very heart of the whole nation. Such armaments can be attained by one means only—the training of all the able-bodied men of the State. This alone will give a basis, solid as a rock, to all machinery of war; this alone will enable the nation to bring to bear, in support of the national will, the whole might of the nation's power.

But, my Lords and gentlemen, our statesmen still assert that the country will never stand compulsory training. Is that so certain? I am persuaded it is by no means certain. On the other hand, it is certain that so long as our fellow-countrymen are soothed and flattered by their leaders into believing that the Territorial Force, as at present constituted, gives all the backing that is necessary to the Navy and Regular Army, they can see no need to consider compulsory training, and are not to be blamed for their belief. But if our leaders would have the honesty and courage to tell the people the truth—the truth being that we are on the eve of a great crisis—a crisis without parallel certainly during the past hundred years, and that our national forces are unfit to meet the strain that may be put upon us with any assurance of success—then I feel confident that the present generation of Britishers would willingly adopt the first necessary reform, the substitution of universal training—compulsory upon all, high and low, rich and poor, from the son of a duke to the son of a labourer—as the foundation of our Territorial Force, instead of the present foolish and unfair method of basing it on a voluntary enlistment. The real difficulty is to move our leaders to take the people

into their confidence and tell them the truth about this vital matter.

My Lords and gentlemen, when I consider the certainty of the struggle in front of us, its probable nearness, and the momentous issues at stake, I am astounded that the nation should be kept in the dark as to the dangers we have to cope with, and for which we most certainly are not prepared. But if our political leaders will take no part in putting our true position before the people, all the more necessary is it for those who love their country, and who have great commercial interests at stake, to help us in our efforts to prevent Great Britain falling from her high estate, and to preserve for her the blessings of peace. With all the strength and earnestness I possess, I want to impress upon you, gentlemen of this great city, that this aim cannot be fulfilled unless we are to have a Navy strong enough to insure our supremacy at sea, and an Army strong enough to prevent invasion, and free the Navy from the necessity of being tied to these shores.



PART III

THE NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE AND THE WORKING CLASSES

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

I HERE insert a letter on the political situation, which I wrote to the *Times* a year ago. This letter, I hope, will serve to show that the National Service League has at least considered the effects which National Service in Arms would have upon the working men of this country.

The assertion advanced by Mr. Blatchford in criticizing my Manchester speech, that the working men of Great Britain will never hear of compulsory service because they distrust the ruling classes, rests upon a misconception of the English Constitution almost too obvious to require exposure. This subject has already been dealt with in Part III. of "Fallacies and Facts" (pp. 208-217), and to that work I must refer the reader. I shall only observe in this place that in a democratic nation the working classes are themselves the ruling classes, and that the interests of England and of the Empire are their interests. Does Mr. Blatchford really imagine that the working men are so blind that, rather than defend those interests like men, they will prefer tamely to hand them over to Germany or to any other foreign Power? For this, and this only, is the logical consequence of his

assertion, that he and his fellow-workers prefer invasion to universal compulsory service.

In former times, when the ruling classes of this nation consisted in very deed of the men of birth and property, that class considered it as its sacred right and inalienable privilege to serve the nation in war. Now, in the twentieth century, when the working men of this country have by the gradual extension of the franchise succeeded to the political influence and supremacy of the old aristocratic class, is it too much to hope that, as their condition of life improves, they will seek in the same spirit to secure that right and that inalienable privilege—service in war? For such service is the only mark of the true and perfect citizenship.

Surely that were a greater path and to a nobler goal than the path and the goal prescribed to the workers of this nation by the criticism in the *Clarion*, to which I have just referred.

NATIONAL SERVICE AND SOCIAL REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

SIR,

The notification in the *Times* that Lord Selborne will shortly address a meeting in London on Imperial unity has caused me to reflect very seriously on what Imperial unity means to us, and on the disastrous effects that must follow any diminution on the part of the oversea Dominions in the splendid feeling of loyalty to the Mother Country of which we have quite recently had such a convincing example.

Personally, I have had sufficient proof of the strength and practical value of that loyalty to make me feel that we should do all in our power to strengthen and foster it; and to this end, and in order that we may retain undiminished the confidence of our distant fellow-subjects, we must begin to put our own house in order, and show the peoples of the oversea Dominions that we are determined to grapple with the several problems with which we are confronted and with which they are immediately concerned — that our Government, for instance, is established on a firm and constitutional basis; that our fiscal policy is sound; and that our Navy and Army are strong enough to defend our own interests, and to give the Dominions such help as they may require in time of trouble.

Yet, what is the present condition of affairs in this country? We have just passed under the

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domination of a Single Chamber. Tariff Reform, which occupies the chief place in the Unionist programme, is supported only in a half-hearted manner by the leaders of the party, and is opposed by some of its most powerful members. Our Navy is being rapidly approached by other navies in the number, speed, and power of their warships. Our Army is quite unfitted to meet the demands that may at any moment be made upon it.

How and by whom is this all to be changed? It can hardly be changed by the party now in power. That party has declared openly enough its policy, alike in regard to a Second Chamber, to Tariff Reform, to the Army and Navy, and therefore also in regard to our position as a first-rate European Power. The men to whom, on account of their high public character and culture, the nation looked for a steadying influence on the ultra-Radical and Socialistic sections of the party, have not fulfilled those expectations, and seem prepared to make any concessions that their most advanced supporters may demand.

On the other hand, is the Unionist party in a condition to bring about the changes that are absolutely necessary before we can take up the question of Imperial unity in any practical manner? Has that party placed before the country a definite policy upon those primary and all-important problems to which I have referred? Is it doing anything to make clearer to the people of this country what these mean to them? Or is it endeavouring to deal with them in a business-like way? I confess I can detect no indications of such a policy, and am not surprised, therefore, that a large number of the most earnest and most thoughtful Unionists have become disheartened and discontented.

It seems to me that the only way the desired end

can be attained is for the prominent members of the Unionist party at once to place before the country a constructive policy; above all, as to the two problems that are the most pressing and the most vital—Social Reform and National Defence. These two problems are intimately connected, and a satisfactory solution of them must precede any real strengthening of Imperial bonds.

The question of Social Reform has been very fully discussed in the public papers during the last few months, and one of the writers on this subject has happily explained it as meaning “securing for the slum-dwellers good air, good housing, good food, good clothes, and good education.” The conditions amid which millions of our people are living appear to me to make it natural that they should not care a straw under what rule they may be called upon to dwell, and I can quite understand their want of patriotic feeling.

Again, by Social Reform I mean a reform which includes essential changes in our primary schools. No other civilized nation leaves its young boys and girls to shift for themselves, as we leave ours when they are thirteen or fourteen years of age. Nor is the education they receive an education calculated to make them lovers of their country. They are never told anything of its history, or taught to be proud of their country and its past. They are not given any idea of what their duty is to their country or what they owe to it. In some schools, indeed, it is even forbidden to hoist the Union Jack. Much of the teaching has no bearing upon actual life, and it comes to an end at the very age at which boys are most receptive of tuition, be it good or evil, and most require to be under some kind of control. Our oversea Dominions are wiser in this respect than we are. By means of Cadet Corps the boys are looked after until they reach the age of manhood,

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and the ground is thus prepared for the formation of a reliable Citizen Army.

The same excellent results are obtained to some small extent in this country by training-ships, homes such as the Gordon Boys' Home, schools like the Duke of York's and the Royal Hibernian Military Schools, and societies like the Church Lads' and Boys' Brigades. Why are the failures in after-life amongst the lads brought up in these institutions so remarkably few? It is simply owing to the habits of order, obedience, and discipline they have been taught in their youth. And the Scout movement has already produced remarkable results. But such organizations are too limited in scope and too few in number, and, with the exception of the two Royal schools, they depend almost entirely upon private enterprise, and to a serious Government or a serious nation they are only sign-posts to the true policy. They should be an integral part of our national education.

Social Reform is a preliminary to any thorough system of national defence. "My country right or wrong; and right or wrong my country!" is the sentiment most treasured in the breast of anyone worthy of the name of man. Nevertheless, with how much more confidence should we be able to appeal to the young men of this nation and the Empire to do their duty as citizen soldiers if we had the certainty that they regarded England, not as a harsh stepmother, but as a true motherland, sedulously nurturing its youth, and not indifferent to their welfare in manhood or in age, and if we could further appeal to them to defend the nation and the Empire, because within its bounds they can live nobler and fuller lives than on any other spot on earth! Yet recent unimpeachable evidence makes it clear that, to tens of thousands of Englishmen engaged in daily toil, the call to

“sacrifice” themselves for their country must seem an insult to their reason; for those conditions amid which they live make their lives already an unending sacrifice.

Will the Unionist party realize the gravity of this state of affairs? The Liberal party, by the Act for Payment of Members, has fulfilled to the letter the trust committed to it by the rising democracies of the 'forties. That Act, the last of the five points of the Charter, ends an epoch of which I can remember the beginnings more than sixty years ago. But the Radical-Liberal party has no longer a policy of construction; it seems only to have given the democracy enfranchisement in order to lead it to the disintegration of a time-honoured Constitution and the gradual dismemberment of a great Empire.

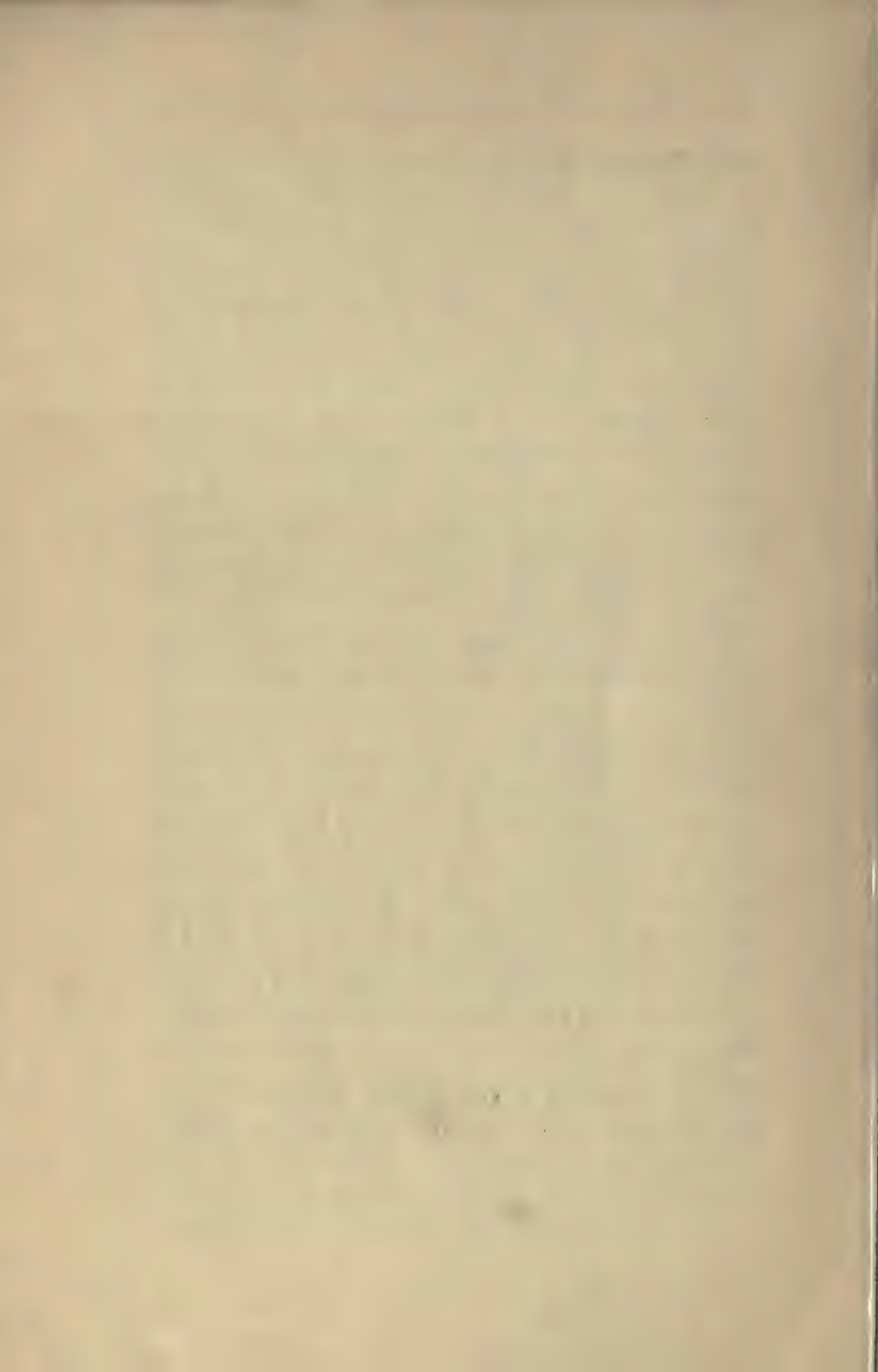
Is it too late to hope that the Unionist party will come forward to lead the millions that wait for a leader?

No party can long continue in power which relies for its prestige solely upon fomenting class hatreds—that is, by dividing the State against itself. But before a great national sacrifice to patriotism can fitly be demanded, a great act of national justice must be performed. The Unionist party missed its opportunity with respect to granting old-age pensions on a contributory basis. Now in 1911 it is confronted by larger issues; by problems affecting the industrial life of the entire nation, and touching, so to speak, the very fountain-head of the Empire's life.

Is it too late?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ROBERTS, F.M.



PART IV

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE KENTISH MEN AND MEN OF KENT

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

WHILST seeing the present little book through the press an opportunity unexpectedly offered itself to me of speaking to some officers of the existing Territorial Force in regard to the dilemma in which they are placed between their duty as patriotic citizens and their growing conviction of the inadequacy of the Territorial Force to perform the task imposed upon it in the event of war.

I therefore subjoin the address which, on the invitation of the officers themselves, I delivered at the annual dinner of the Kentish Men and the Men of Kent, on November 27, 1912.

In that address I was able to state more fully than at Manchester my reasons for criticizing the Territorial Force with regard to discipline, numbers, equipment, and energy.

ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE
KENT TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATION,
LONDON

NOVEMBER 27, 1912.

GENTLEMEN,

Words fail me when I try to tell you what a great pleasure it was to me to be able to accept the invitation of the Kentish Men and the Men of Kent to their annual dinner. I was more than gratified by their invitation, for I felt that I should not have been asked to be their guest had they interpreted my comments on the Territorial Force in my Manchester speech in the way some people have done, as an attack upon the members of the Force. Indeed, I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity having been given to me to explain my views about the Force more fully than it was possible for me to do at Manchester.

Well, gentlemen, if I am right in feeling that you acquit me of any desire to disparage the officers and men who compose the Territorial Force, and that you will believe me when I repeat, what I have often said before, that I am second to none in my admiration of the patriotism and self-sacrifice displayed by them in their endeavour to make Lord Haldane's scheme a success—you will not, I am sure, misunderstand me if I now express my views quite frankly to you.

At the Manchester meeting I gave it as my opinion that the Territorial Force is a *failure in*

discipline, a failure in numbers, a failure in equipment, and a failure in energy. Let me say a few words on each of these supremely important points.

Failure in Discipline.—Gentlemen, only those who have taken part in war, or have carefully studied the history of wars, can, I am persuaded, realize to its full extent the significance of discipline as applied to war. They alone can know that it is by discipline, and discipline alone, that bodies of men can be relied upon to work together in times of great difficulty and danger, and to withstand the disintegrating effect of war; for they have learnt that it is discipline alone which prevents panic seizing upon men when unforeseen circumstances arise. They alone know that amongst untrained or ill-trained troops panic spreads with lightning rapidity, and that when there is no sense of discipline to be appealed to and to keep the men together, defeat is the inevitable result.

It is discipline alone which gives the soldier confidence in himself, reliance on his comrades, and belief in his officers. It is discipline alone which gives him the courage to face vastly superior numbers; to continue marching, though worn out with fatigue and want of food, ready to fight again, and yet again. It is discipline alone that supports him under the strain of lying still for successive hours in the punishing fire zone—one of the most trying of the many exacting conditions of modern warfare. It is discipline alone which makes the soldier obey the word of command, even under such circumstances as I have described. Clear understanding of and prompt obedience to an order become an instinct to the properly trained soldier, whereas the imperfectly trained man, when he finds himself in an unfamiliar and trying position, frequently misunderstands the word of command,

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and, when matters become acute, he does not heed or even hear it.

Gentlemen, when I tell you that discipline is the backbone of an army, I ask you whether it is possible for that essential quality to be instilled into the ranks of the Territorial Force with the amount of training that is given to them.

Failure in Numbers.—Gentlemen, despite the untiring efforts of the Territorial Associations—a large proportion of whose members are staunch supporters of the National Service League—the Territorial Force is still far short of its established strength of 315,000 men. Possibly this is a blessing in disguise, for if men had come forward in sufficient numbers to bring the Force up to its establishment, politicians would have assured the country, even more fervently than they do now, that our Home Defence Army is in all respects what is needed. The truth is that the number 315,000 has no relation to our real requirements. It was fixed upon because the experience of fifty years had proved that a larger number could never be forthcoming under the voluntary system. As with the Regular Army, so with the Home Defence Army, the strength is governed by what is known to be the limit obtainable by voluntary effort. It has no relation to the requirements of war. It solves no known problem. Again, therefore, gentlemen, I ask you whether it is possible to regard the Territorial Force as fitted, in respect to numbers, for the defence of the United Kingdom.

Failure in Equipment.—In common with the Regular Army the Territorial Force is armed with a rifle inferior to the rifle possessed by foreign nations, and with a less deadly bullet than is used by them. But the Territorial rifle is even inferior to the present Regular Army rifle in range, in trajectory, and in stopping power.

Then the gun in use with the Territorial Artillery is a mere makeshift. It is distinctly inferior in power, range, and rapidity of fire to the gun of any first-rate State, and it is not too much to say that, if our Regular soldiers were armed as the Territorials are armed, they could not keep the field against the troops of any European nation. If this is so, how unfair, how disastrous, it would be to ask Territorial troops to undertake a task which their seasoned and disciplined comrades of the Regular Army could not face.

Then as regards mobilization arrangements, supply and transport services, ammunition columns, trains, horses, vehicles, harness, even boots for the men—in none of these essentials are the Territorials, as a Force, complete. I therefore repeat that *failure in equipment* is not an unfair statement.

Failure in Energy.—By failure in energy, I do not for a moment mean to imply that individual members of the Territorial Force are wanting in energy. I know how earnestly many of them have striven to learn and to do their duty under adverse circumstances. My criticism applies to the Force itself—to its corporate energy—if I may use such an expression. And even those who are the firmest believers in the Force must, I think, admit that, under existing conditions, it is not practicable for it to attain that combined action, that alertness, that intensity and vitality, all of which are essential to success in war.

But, gentlemen, in addition to the shortcomings of the Territorial Force which I have enumerated, there is one defect in its conception which would alone show its unfitness for what you all know is its primary duty—that is, to defend these shores from invasion. That defect lies in the strange condition which is an essential factor in this scheme—a condition unprecedented with any army in the world—

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namely, that the Force is to receive six months' training, after war has broken out, before it is even supposed to be capable of dealing with an invading army. Can any scheme for the defence of any nation be more madly conceived? We have been given an object lesson in the Near East as to the insanity of the idea that our Citizen Army will be given six months to prepare after war has been declared. On October 8 Montenegro declared war, and in four weeks the Turks were beaten in all directions and were making their last stand within a few miles of Constantinople.

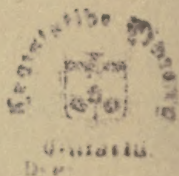
Gentlemen, I am told by my opponents that it is unpatriotic of me to express these opinions, and that by doing so I am discouraging the Territorial Force. But which is really the more unpatriotic course, to tell the truth about the Force, so that the people of this country may insist upon its terrible deficiencies being remedied, or to gloss over these deficiencies and thus to expose to certain disaster the few patriotic men who have joined it, and who are asked to be prepared with a Force untrained, under-officered, and under-manned to cope with a highly-trained enemy.

I venture to think, gentlemen, that I am doing you no disservice in speaking plainly about the Territorial Force. My hope is that when its grave condition is no longer concealed from our countrymen, they will realize the folly of trusting the defence of these shores to a make-believe Army, that they will take to heart the false position in which the patriotic members of the Force are placed, and that they will insist upon a law being passed by which all able-bodied men must be prepared to take their place in the Citizen Army. The Territorial Force must either be made efficient in all respects, or it will speedily cease to be a Force even in name.

I hope, gentlemen, you will understand that I am thinking and speaking of the Territorial Force as a Force that must be prepared to move and live, to march and fight as an army. I am not thinking of individual men, or companies, or batteries, or squadrons, but of a Force which, if it is ever called upon to take the field, will have to deal as a whole with highly-trained picked troops.

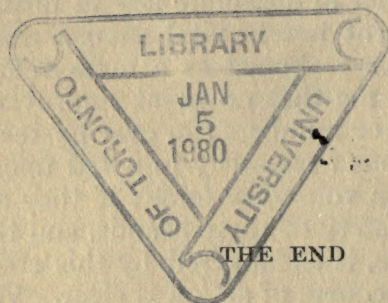
What, then, gentlemen, is right for the Territorial officers to do? It seems to me that a tremendous responsibility rests upon those officers. If they agree with me that neither they themselves, nor the men they command, are sufficiently trained to take the field against first-class soldiers; if they agree with me that neither in discipline nor in numbers, neither in equipment nor in vital energy, can the Territorial Force be reckoned as a modern army; if they agree with me that no great improvement either in efficiency or numbers can ever be reached under the conditions necessarily imposed upon all citizens who enter a voluntary force; if they agree with me that the safety of these islands, and therefore of our Empire, is endangered by this state of affairs—then their course of action is clear. While still giving of their best to the Force to which they belong, while still setting the fine example which they have consistently done, they should make the Government and the nation distinctly understand that, in their opinion, they are unable to carry out the duties entrusted to them, and that unless they are given the trained assistance of the manhood of the country, they can never guarantee the safety of these islands and the integrity of the Empire.

Such a warning, coming from such men, will awaken the country in a way that I can never hope to do. Such an announcement, coming from



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the men who alone in the country have obeyed the call of duty, and who, at the cost of convenience, time, and money, have tried to fit themselves for the defence of their country and the security of the Empire—such a summons, I say, will arouse the People, and they themselves will call upon the Government to enact a law which shall impose upon all citizens of a military age the noble duty of defending the country and the Empire to which they have the glory to belong.



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